

Day Camp Manual



Ministry of
Tourism and
Recreation

DAZON
TO
-2005



Campers

CREDO

If a camper lives with criticism, he learns to condemn.

If a camper lives with hostility, he learns to fight.

If a camper lives with jealousy, he learns to feel guilty.

If a camper lives with tolerance, he learns to be patient.

If a camper lives with encouragement, he learns to be confident.

If a camper lives with praise, he learns to be appreciative.

If a camper lives with approval, he learns to like himself.

If a camper lives with honesty, he learns what truth is.

If a camper lives with fairness, he learns justice.

If a camper lives with security, he learns to have faith in himself and those about him.

If a camper lives with friendliness, he learns the world is a nice place in which to live.

Adapted from "As a Twig is Bent"

Kleinknecht Encyclopedia

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The Day Camp Manual, as originally developed by a committee of the Ontario Camping Association, has served the camping community well. In order to continue to be a valuable resource, however, a publication must remain current. Discussions with Dorothy Walter of the Camping and Outdoor Education Services, Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, led to the decision that this publication needed to be revised.

As the initial contributor to the original manual, I know the task of revising the four sections has been an onerous one. I am pleased to have had an active group of contributors representing the Day Camp Committee of the Ontario Camping Association to review materials, share their knowledge and make major contributions to the content.

The group included:

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All gave generously of their time and energy. I am grateful for their assistance in the developing of these revised manuals.

Bill Babcock
Camp Richildaca

TITLES IN THE Y CAMP SERIES

1. Administration
2. Staff
3. Campers
4. Programs



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INTRODUCTION

All children who come to camp are unique individuals. They all have their own personalities, their own likes and dislikes, their own experiences and their own personal needs. We must, therefore, treat them as individuals. Our goal is to provide each of them with a happy and satisfying camp experience. Some understanding of these children and their development will contribute to the achievement of this goal.

Perhaps it is to state the obvious when we say that without children, day camps would not exist. At times, however, we can lose sight of this important fact. When we get caught up in the day-to-day problems of a typical camp, all staff, directors and counsellors alike, must pause and remember that the camper is first on our list of priorities.

PRE-SCHOOL DAY CAMPERS AND THEIR COUNSELLORS

Each summer many of us share our days with pre-school campers. To meet these children's emotional and intellectual needs, we must encourage their abilities, share and enjoy their growing and learning experiences.

Each child has an individuality, a uniqueness. Children come to our group from a unique home situation, from an emotional and intellectual environment, with varying specific needs and abilities. They come to us with the seeds of basic human creativity — the desire to express their uniqueness. Margaret Mead tells us "It is the child's growing capacity to take in the world, re-work experience, and give it out again in speech, song, craft or art, and in all the activities in which men engage; that is the course of individuality."

Each child sees the same sight through different eyes, hears the same sound through different ears. To each, the same experience has a unique meaning. The expression of thoughts and feelings gained from their experience is unique to each child and, therefore, valid and worthwhile.

We must be prepared to be totally receptive to the child's thoughts and feelings. In expressing these experiences, they are presenting themselves, for they are saying "this has meaning to me, this is what I feel, how I think, this is who I am." Our reaction is crucial to them. A child works on a mirror basis, with themselves reflected in your reaction to them. If you react to what they say or do in a negative manner, they feel themselves deserving of that negative reaction. If they sense condemnation, they experience rejection, self-doubt. If they sense acceptance, respect, they feel themselves acceptable and having worth.

Just as we can help children to enjoy positive learning and growing times, we can help them to understand and accept their negative feelings without fear or reproach, shame, or need of guilt. One of the vital learning areas for children is their growing ability to accept and deal with anger, sadness and fear. We must help them to express threatening fantasies and accept reassurance and safety in adult comfort.

If children have learned to trust you, if they have learned that your words are words they can understand, your promises are reliable, and that they are important to you, they may reach out to you with their feelings. Their hands find yours when they are afraid. They yell at you when they are angered, or climb into your lap when unsure or sad. Help them to accept their anger and sadness, and meet the fear.

What about a child who misbehaves? What about discipline? What about control? Control is a very dangerous term, a term with many meanings. Each counsellor brings to children a very different concept of control, depending on their feelings about control, their need for control, their experiences in controlling, and in being controlled. As counsellors, our responsibility is to make our children feel safe and protected. We have no right to impose arbitrary forms of control on our children, unless the emotional or physical safety of any child is in question. We have no right to restrict free thought or movement of the individual child. We do have the very important right to make some relevant decisions for each child, regarding their physical well-being; "Yes, it is cold out this morning, and you must wear your sweater." "No, I will not allow you to run around the playground with a sharp stick." We can make these decisions for each child. We must ensure their safety and comfort. We must protect each child without resorting to unnecessary restrictions. We must help children to develop controls from within themselves, and take special care not to impose arbitrary forms of control from without. We cannot impose our sense of control on them to the detriment of the development of their own controls.

What about the child whose behaviour disturbs the safety of the other children? The child who is throwing sand at another camper in the sandbox may be asked to leave that situation and given a positive alternative, such as playing at another activity. Deal with the child's negative behaviour in a positive manner without reinforcing the behaviour. If the misdemeanor merits admonishing, then direct your discipline at the misdemeanor, not at the child. Never make the child the object of your ridicule. If you regard the child's behaviour with large doses of condemnation or anger, the child will feel

deserving of condemnation, and will feel shame and guilt. Let the child know that it is the action, not the child, that is unacceptable.

Just as children's tears are signs of their need for help, so their misbehaviour reflects a need, serving as a symptom of their negative feelings. Why is a particular child behaving in such a manner? What does this behaviour mean to the child? What does it mean to you? A child's anger is very difficult to deal with at times, perhaps because we are reminded too clearly of our own. You can never fail by asking for help. You can only fail in responsibility when you fail a child. Ask for help to learn how to reach your children.

There is perhaps something incomplete about the picture created here. The counsellor described is a bit unreal, a super-counsellor, champion of the correct way with children, pillar of patience, good-natured and kind. Let's face it, we too have very important feelings of our own. We get angry at times, and feel sad too. Our children should learn to understand that we also have our valid feelings. We will lose control at times, but what can we do when we do lose control of our feelings? We must regain it as soon as possible and interpret our anger to the child. We must take special care not to alienate the child at these times, not to make the child fear our feelings. We must interpret our feelings in such a way as to make them feel safe. Let the child know that you are angry. You have the right to be angry, but regain control and reassure the child immediately. The child should feel safer because he knows your limits. We must not betray our children by being dishonest, whether in feelings, actions or words.

We've mentioned the possible problems that you may encounter with campers, and tried to suggest some of the positive ways to help your children deal with these problems. Now let's consider the happy, fun times that we can share with our children. One of the most enjoyable and rewarding qualities of being with pre-school children is sharing their fun. It gives us a chance to return to the magical games of play that we ourselves enjoyed so much when we were three or four. Sharing these games, joining in them on the same level as the child is experiencing them, is so important to our relationship with the child. The ability to play, to enjoy, comes with just a little abandonment and relaxation of the formal adult role. As you join the children in sand, or run with them in the playground, you share with them real and good feelings. You may develop a satisfying affection for some children, as you come to know them and have fun with them. The natural and spontaneous expression of affection is part of such relationships. Those children sure are huggable at times and they enjoy being hugged. A whole day away from home and mommy is a very long time for the pre-school child. They need warmth. They need doses of mothering and a bit of loving-up. Don't feel inhibited or restricted about meeting the need.

In summary, we've dealt with many aspects of the pre-school camper and their counsellor. We've looked at the uniqueness of their thoughts, their feelings and their individual manner in expressing them. We've considered how important it is to children that you accept them, that you help them to understand and accept themselves. They will come to you with their anger, their fears and tears, as well as the excitement, enthusiasm, and the great joy of discovery.

We must help them to accept all that they are, to greet learning with a sense of excitement and confidence in their ability. We must share their creativity, the expression of self, and the price of uniqueness.

We must strive to know our pre-school children. We must watch, listen and observe before we act. For we must act with real understanding, real compassion. We must offer them safety and protection and at the same time freedom to explore the bounds of their curiosity. We will come to share ourselves with them and we must be prepared to be totally receptive to all that they are able to give to us.

CHILDREN'S
NEEDS AND
CHARACTERISTICS
AGES 6 - 12

Every child is different. Each is a small reflection of their own home. Each has their own level of ability. Each has their own likes and dislikes.

What are some of the general needs of children?

fun	adventure	friendship
love	activity	knowledge
trust	independence	understanding
acceptance	new skills	shelter
guidance	encouragement	food

Children of about the same age have interests in common and many similarities. The characteristics that are listed should not be interpreted as a rigid timetable. They merely suggest what is likely to occur at a specific age. Because of individual differences, behaviours may occur for some children earlier or later, or perhaps not at all.

Six Years

- period of slow growth. Rest period. Child must not go home tired
- eager to learn
- self-assertive
- inconsistent in behaviour
- short attention span
- finds decision-making difficult
- group activities are popular
- spontaneous dramatization, keen to dress up
- learns better by doing, not listening
- likes some structure
- can be ego-centric
- likes to touch, handle, mix
- likes to start things but often becomes discouraged before finished
- great ability to pretend and make believe
- very active
- lacks organization
- vivid imagination.

Seven Years

- sensitive to opinions of peers and adults
- interests of boys and girls begin to diverge
- energetic but easily fatigued
- difficulty in thinking in abstract terms
- more inclined to be self-critical; a great need for approval
- responds well to praise
- growth is slow and steady
- leadership ability will start to show
- simple organizational skills develop
- aggressiveness might start to show.

Eight Years

- carefree and enthusiastic
- careless and noisy -- socially minded
- likes to command attention
- hard working
- idolizes people who do their best
- loves to talk
- intellectually curious
- at times more dependent on mother
- interests of boys and girls differ greatly, gangs develop
- more enthusiasm than wisdom
- allegiance to peer group rather than adults
- better able to judge his own abilities
- ready for simple directed dramatics
- interested in collecting things, enjoys team games.

Nine Years

- reasonable, dependable, responsible
- strong sense of right and wrong
- individual differences in abilities very pronounced
- longer attention span develops
- given to exaggeration
- highly competitive
- enjoys stories, nature tales and rhythmic music
- stealing not uncommon
- can assume more responsibility -- likes to be trusted
- a limited sense of money and time values
- gang spirit strong
- perfectionist but easily discouraged
- outspoken and critical of adults
- argues over fair play
- likes repetition
- loves animals
- often is clumsy
- natural curiosity develops
- likes fun, the fun angle, not the educational approach
- loves dramatics, costumes, and story-telling
- becoming aware of own emotions, but often disregards the feelings of others.

Ten, Eleven and Twelve Years

- great physiological development
- group minded age; the gang is supreme
- begins to challenge adults; quarreling, loud voices and fighting are common
- wants the love of an adult, often develops crushes
- wants to be older
- interest can be sustained for a longer period of time
- prefers group activities
- likes adventure
- will take long hikes, nothing daunts them
- tremendous amount of intellectual activity; nature, science, songs, vocational plans, needs much program
- will accept cooking responsibilities
- will work on construction projects
- likes berry picking, fishing
- curious about art
- like to plan parts of their own program
- has a pronounced sense of responsibility
- has a pronounced sense of humour
- has a sense of fair-play
- loves to talk about home and family relationships
- privacy and secrets are important, aiding a sense of independence.

CHART OF CHILD NEEDS Prepared for the Ontario Teachers Federation by: The Canadian Mental Health Association

NEEDS	From Parents	From Teachers	From Playmates	From Community
Emotional Affection (feeling of being loved)	Comradeship. Playing no favorites. Serenity in home.	Evident fondness for child. Happy co-operative atmosphere in classroom. Kindness, fairness.	Friendships. Interest in child's achievements	Understanding teachers. Active child welfare agencies and kind foster parents when home supervision breaks down.
Belonging (feeling of being wanted by the group)	Significant share in family work and play. Proud of child as member of family.	Welcoming child in school and giving real share in activities of classroom and playground.	Companionship. Genuine share in group's activities.	Inspiring child's co-operation to contribute to the beauty, health and welfare of the community.
Independence (feeling of managing and directing own life)	Child helped to stand on own feet. Given opportunities to make decisions and choose friends with reasonable guidance.	Initiative encouraged. Participation in class discussions. Training in self control and self direction.	Child given his turn in doing things and being leader.	Opportunities for older children and youth to have part in community councils.
Achievement (satisfaction from making things and doing jobs)	Encouragement in school work. Opportunities for worthwhile tasks; hobbies and adventure.	Work at which child can succeed. Opportunities for success in sports, hobbies, dramatics, etc.	Child included in school projects, sports, dramatics, musical and other activities.	Vocational guidance. Share in community enterprises-- recycling, organic gardening, church activities, etc.
Social Approval (feeling that others approve of conduct and efforts)	Praise for good behavior, honest effort in work and other accomplishments (sports, making friends, etc.)	Commendation for good behavior, diligence in school work, success in sports, dramatics, music, etc.	Generous admiration for child's accomplishments in school work, sports, dramatics, etc.	Credit for constructive activities.
Self Esteem (feeling of being worthwhile)	Confidence in child and his future.	Making child feel a worthwhile person. Helping child understand and accept his strengths and weaknesses.	Appreciation of child's good qualities	Making child feel he matters to community. Giving him share in community enterprises.
Intellectual (for training in ability to think clearly and solve problems wisely)	Encouraging children to find out the facts before coming to conclusions.	Training children to think in an orderly fashion, to acquire sound study habits, and to read widely.	Participation in group projects planned and carried out by children themselves.	Compulsory education. Inviting partnership of children in helping solve community problems. Developing partnership between home and school.
Character & Social (for developing ability to live with others in a co-operative and worthy way)	Good standards of behavior at home, encouraging honesty, sincerity, social service and spiritual development. Sex education.	Training child to co-operate with others in work and play and to complete difficult tasks for worthwhile ends.	Approval of child when a good sport (good loser, good winner, etc.)	Good character-building agencies--schools, churches, playgrounds, day nurseries, recreation centres, etc.
Physical (for developing a healthy body and good health habits)	Nutritious food, adequate sleep, suitable clothing, sanitary living quarters, medical and dental care, training in good health habits, outdoor activities.	Health education, physical training, co-operation with medical authorities in health inspection and immunization against disease.	Consideration by child of health and handicaps of associates. Full co-operation in preventing spread of contagious diseases.	Adequate medical and dental services. Immunization against diseases. Sanitary living conditions. Full social security.

DAY CAMPERS OVER 12

DIRECTOR'S COMMENT

There are many reasons why day campers over 12 years of age return to camp each summer. Many return because they have enjoyed the camp program in the previous years. They like to renew acquaintances and also look forward to making new friends. Others have an eye to the future when they themselves can become counsellors. Whatever the reason they return to camp, it is generally agreed that this particular age group of campers need special consideration.

To ensure an enjoyable and worthwhile experience for these campers, it is necessary to provide a program which keeps in mind the needs of the early adolescent.

Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- daily schedule should allow for more individuality and personal section of activities- organization is required but maintain a degree of flexibility- involve campers in program planning- provide opportunity for competition -- both individual and group- select program themes with care — themes are more complex and need to be fully developed.
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- counsellor's role becomes one of guiding rather than directing- campers should have an opportunity to take some degree of leadership, particularly with younger campers- staff should function more as resource counsellors or facilitators- provide encouragement and motivation for campers to show initiative.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- camp experiences should allow campers to have increased responsibility in a safe way- counsellors should assist campers in setting their own personal priorities- development of skills and knowledge at an appropriate level is important- allow time for socializing with peers but balance this with participation in camp-wide activities.

We must remember that these campers are at camp because they enjoy camping. Their need for increased autonomy should be recognized but safety and supervision must always balance the freedom and flexibility of individualized programming.

CAMPER PANEL DISCUSSION

The following is a summary of a panel discussion between four senior campers and two counsellors:

Program	Senior campers agreed that the main reason they still look forward to going to camp is that the program is not static. Different activities, and methods of presentation give them a new experience each year. The boys leaned toward challenging wilderness types of programs and emphasized self-satisfaction through accomplishment as being important. The girls were inclined to take part in a casual program emphasizing group interaction. All felt there should be a lot of opportunity to do what they wanted, sit under a tree and talk, work on a group project, go for a walk alone. Schedules do not enhance good program for
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senior campers, unless they are developed by the campers themselves. Both boys and girls felt they should be able to drop-out of a camp group if they wanted to at times. Program themes are not of interest to either group, particularly the Indian theme. Specific programs that interested the boys were: hiking, canoeing, horseback riding, and archery. Specific programs that interested the girls were: canoeing, crafts, riding and quiet time discussions.

Leadership

Leadership was mainly seen as being the relationship existing between counsellor and camper. The campers felt they knew enough about camping to decide what to do and how to do it. The counsellor provides them with an opportunity to widen their horizons by supplying new and different programs or approaches and must particularly be a friend or help-mate who is interesting and fun to be with. They must also be interested in sitting down and talking face-to-face.

The campers did not want a program imposed by counsellor or anyone else, but rather wanted an opportunity to share in the program planning while being given an opportunity to branch into new activities.

Personal Objectives

Day campers come to camp to have an exciting and fun-filled summer. This means new programs and developing skills; maintaining and making new friendships; and reliving happy experiences. Awards and incentives are not necessary to give them this experience but they are not considered a hindrance.

Senior campers looked to a camp leadership role in the future and welcomed an opportunity to develop some leadership skills through acceptance of responsibilities.

Camp Atmosphere

The campers felt the atmosphere should be permissive enough to allow freedom to experiment with activities of interest. They felt that regulations for general camp security and safety do not apply universally and that by virtue of their age and experience they should be allowed certain privileges such as use of knives and axes; use of restricted area; later lights out on overnights; and being able to wander off on their own in small groups.

All campers felt that camp offered them the secure atmosphere of a second home where they could act in a manner quite apart from the way they would act away from camp. Many of the things they do at camp would otherwise be considered foolish or childish. Since many personal inhibitions are lost at camp, activities such as stunts, sing-songs, crafts, etc. seem quite natural. The campers felt sorry for their non-camping friends, because they usually spent their summer hanging around and didn't know what they were missing.

Inter-Group Relationships

The senior campers do not want to participate with younger campers all day. However, they do enjoy coming together for events such as campfires. They want to feel a part of the total camp, but be a separate section within that framework. They felt it was important that their area should be removed from the other camp areas to ensure privacy. When they do come into contact with the rest of the campers they like to assume a special helper role which gives them status and recognition. Being responsible for some special event activities or helping at campfires are responsibilities they like to accept. The boys particularly liked being responsible for collecting wood for the campfire and preparing the ceremonial fire lay. They felt that many equally important jobs or duties could be given to them so long as they held a bit of prestige and couldn't be considered joe-jobs.

CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

INTEGRATION OR SEGREGATION?"

Many people say, "I wouldn't want to work with special children. I might do the wrong thing." If everyone felt this way, no one would do anything. Anyone who will try can work wonders because they are saying "I care". If due to a lack of experience you feel inadequate and uncomfortable, then be assured that, through a program of integration and interaction, you and your campers will have rewarding experiences.

All children can benefit from a normal camp experience, regardless of their parent's religious beliefs, racial origins, or their natural capacity for learning and growing, either physically or mentally. It has been found that in every group of 100 children, 25 to 30% have major intellectual, physical or emotional problems. If each of those individuals can find a place where they can find a place where they can find acceptance and learn to accept the exceptionality that is theirs, much will be done to free these individuals to grow to the limits of their capacity. If children with special needs are to function in the community, then each one needs to be exposed to the reality of daily living.

There are many types of exceptionalities, some not as obvious as others, but each needs to be recognized and given consideration. Counsellors should be aware that working with special children can be very demanding, but also very rewarding. A sincere effort and an open mind will get you started in the right direction.

Let us consider some of these areas of special need.

MULTICULTUR- ALISM

Today we are finding that more and more children come from diverse cultural backgrounds. Children from many parts of the world are adjusting to and learning to cope with our social customs, values and language. The experienced counsellor must be aware that many social or ethnic differences may exist within a group of campers. Staff must accept each individual and make every attempt to make them feel comfortable in their new surroundings. Tolerance, patience and understanding are key elements in making a child feel relaxed and accepted. Don't try to change individuals or disregard unique customs. Many children have a lot that they can share. In fact, a positive exchange of cultural differences can be rewarding for all involved.

FAMILY SITUATIONS

An increasing number of children, who need special consideration, are those who come from unique family situations. These might include single parent families (a mother or a father), foster children, step children and others. It could be a family where a recent tragedy, parental unemployment, or even a family health problem puts a strain on the day-to-day living experience of the child. For these children, the concept of family and its associated experiences are different than for those children who come from a more traditional environment. These children may exhibit feelings and behaviour that reflect their own individual sets of circumstances. The perceptive counsellor does not pry into the private lives of campers by asking personal questions, make sarcastic and unthoughtful remarks, but rather shows an awareness and sincere concern for the welfare of the campers. Tact, thoughtfulness and sincerity will go a long way when a camper initiates conversation about his problems. Listening, and trying to understand will mean a lot to the child who wishes to talk and to trust someone.

CASE STUDIES

The following are case studies of some of the more extreme individual differences and how they function in a normal camp setting.

Roberto

Roberto, a quick, agile, handsome lad, willing to please and with lots of ideas of his own, is an aphasic. From my first meeting, when he was 3 years old and unable to speak, to his fast growing 10-1/2 years with some language, he has kept things boiling in his group. But his camper friends, his counsellors and all of us have derived much benefit. Can you imagine the thrill when a 20 year old counsellor came running excitedly to me to come and see and hear Roberto calling bingo numbers for his group in his awkward, difficult speech pattern. This was something to hear and see. Tears were in both our eyes. A camper, when it was decided that Roberto should not go to another camp for soccer because he might create an incident, came with the whole group as a delegation requesting that we allow him to go and they would watch him. Roberto was excellent at following rules which he could visibly comprehend and he couldn't understand anyone breaking them. In fact, he could get fairly volatile. Right was right. However, he had learned much from his group over the years and when allowed to go, he was so successful and so aware in the second camp setting that their campers and directors couldn't even place him. His buddies were so proud, and so was Roberto. So many successes, also many failures, but once the children and their parents understood that Roberto's differences were nothing to fear and that he was not a monster that needed to be isolated from society, we began solving many of Roberto's social and emotional problems.

Philip

Philip was a child who used fear to manipulate his world. It took some doing to understand this. For example, it was agonizing to see him going into the pool daily, screaming that he was going to drown, yet all the time wanting to go. By the end of the first season the swim director came to me and said "We've come so far with Philip, he's ready to float but won't. What should I do?" My answer, "Walk away and let someone else take over." He went back to Philip and said, "Philip, you are ready to float. I can't do that for you. I have helped you this far, now I must help other children. When you are ready to go on, let me know and we will continue." Two days later Philip floated. Within the next few weeks, many other campers were passing tests and surprising counsellors and swim staff. When asked "Why" the swim director said his staff had learned so much from working with Philip that they wanted to try it out on other children. Fantastic results! Philip has been with us two years. He was to have been sent to Ontario Hospital. We were making mistakes, but so would they. He has solved and adjusted to his differences so he has already adjusted to the society about him.

Peter

There was also a boy named Peter. He had many differences and difficulties. He had an odd appearance due to a cleft palate, hair lip, and a medical problem with his heart. Often he had bizarre behaviour patterns and withdrawal tendencies not unlike an autistic schizophrenic (but without tantrums). Some brain damage had created some motor problems and he was often unintelligible. Peter was with us from the age of five. He is now eleven. He was in our school operation during the winter months, to the grade 2 level, and is now in a special education class. Through all his problems and his mumblings, we discovered a delightful sense of humour and a good capacity for learning many things. The greatest threat with Peter was swimming. He loved to go to the pool, but he would immediately go underwater and stay at the bottom of the pool. We never had the courage to wait for his sense of survival to come forth. A staff member was always right with him at this time to haul him up on his feet and try again.

With encouragement and the use of many positive reinforcement teaching skills, he has learned to swim a little.

Having the endorsement of his doctor and parents, Peter was encouraged to participate in everything. During a soccer game with his friends, Peter's team scored a point and Peter was heard to mumble "That will put them on the griddle." The boys doubled over with laughter. Shouts of "Okay Peter" or "Let's go, Peter" were often heard. I don't recall him doing much with the ball, but he was part of it and the boys and counsellors would encourage him with admiring remarks like "That was a good run you made" or "You're getting faster", etc.

Each boy was pleased to be Peter's companion for the day and they were rewarded in many ways. I recall a day when taking a walk away from the camp. Peter tired and had to sit down on a rock. He and his companion for that day were brought face-to-face with a grass snake shedding his skin. The whole group was called excitedly back to watch and Peter was proclaimed as the nature discoverer. So many things would have been missed without this child.

Lauren

Lauren had been diagnosed as schizophrenic, aphasic, deaf, retarded, brain damaged. A label didn't help. It only confused and frightened. She needed to be accepted and enjoyed to be free to start the climb to normalcy. Now, five years later, she is the most popular member of her family. Three and a half years ago, she had no speech; now only the d's present a problem. I was fortunate in being with her over a 12-month period. It was her acceptance by people in the freedom of summer, the fun of learning water skills, running with the wind or lying in deep grass listening for sounds, that made Lauren work harder to be part of normal life.

Linda

Linda was a child in our camp last year, labelled a borderline mongoloid. Her I.Q. was 52 — two points too high to be labelled one thing, not high enough to be labelled another. There appeared to be no place for her in a camp or in the school system. But, she taught her fellow campers and her counsellors how to share love, and especially how to say "I did it!" or "What should I have done?" Everyone of these children who were with Linda had an exciting and rewarding summer experience because of Linda.

They learned the responsibility of making an error, as a part of growing and learning. Many children feel threatened by what will happen if they make an error, so they make all kinds of excuses, tell lies and get other people into trouble. Linda didn't. In answer to "Who left their bedroll here?" she would say "I guess I was the one who did it. What should I have done?" When we explained that we realized it was hard for her to do it, but she should get someone to help her, she immediately replied "Who will help me fold my bedroll?" Six voices said "I will Linda." The counsellor chose two and together they showed Linda how it was done, so proud to be showing off their skill and knowledge. She doesn't sound like a borderline mongoloid, certainly not the kind I have read about. The children were held back sometimes by her slowness, but more often it was to wait behind to help her, and for this they were rewarded by her beaming smile of thankfulness and joy, and her little, often overheard saying "You are wonderful." Of course, each camper's self-image and respect for one another leapt to great heights. Could this have happened without Linda?

LABELLING

Does labelling really help? Any label that sets a child aside from his basic needs of love and acceptance and makes people feel uncomfortable and frightened, must be wrong. Any resulting interaction only makes the child more anxious, disturbed and sick. The condition must be known, but the child's other needs must not be neglected because of the label. There are many problems with special children, but surely we can be expected only to care enough to do our best. Camping, which is relaxed, does much for a special child.

DISCIPLINE

A MATTER OF HUMAN RELATIONS

In the area of human relations, most young people coming to a summer camp for the first time, find themselves abruptly in a strange territory with few landmarks. Their experience with discipline has found them, for the most part, on the receiving end of the process.

First, as leaders, they should realize that there are few "born" disciplinarians. Most of us have to work at the art. Secondly, as senior leaders, we do not expect the new staff member to acquire naturally the proper attitude and accepted means of disciplining children. We must, then, share what has been an evolution in our own style and methods of handling children.

What is Discipline?

Unfortunately, the word "discipline" tends to suggest the militaristic concept of total submission of the individual to an authority. Any deviation from the established order is awarded with punishment of some nature.

At camp, discipline implies not misdemeanours and crude physical punishments, but rather teaching, training, guidance and mutual trust. We discipline campers with the long term goal of helping to contribute to the development of the child's inner controls, so that he can live effectively as an adult in society. Granting that the ultimate aim of teaching self-discipline is a slowly acquired attainment for children, at camp, it should be our goal.

Some Suggestions For Developing A Good Camping Atmosphere

The old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure certainly still holds true for modern counsellors. For every accident there is a cause. For every discipline problem there is a reason. In order to understand the reason, the counsellors must first look to:

- themselves
- their attitude
- their program

and then to the campers. The misbehaviour of children is usually a symptom. It is necessary to find the causes for these symptoms before a lasting change in the child's behaviour can be made. Once the motive is understood, one must cultivate an objectivity which will reject the misbehaviour without rejecting the camper.

The following tried and tested preventatives might serve as guidelines for the new leader. The list is long, but by no means exhaustive.

Observation

Watch your camper as much as you can. By being constantly alert, you can spot a potential troublemaker before the plan to create a problem is more than a gleam in his/her eye.

Preparation and Planning

Know what you are doing! Advance preparation and some organization will save you many headaches. When your campers find out you are a phoney and playing it by ear, they will lose all confidence in you. When confidence and, subsequently, respect is lost, your discipline and control of your charges will rapidly disintegrate.

Plan constructive, positive and meaningful activities for your campers. Most trouble results from boredom or inactivity.

Enthusiasm

Be enthusiastic! That word is a most popular one among unit leaders. Have a keen and genuine interest in your campers and their activities. Enthusiasm is catching. Avoid monotony in your presentations. Occasionally vary your style, your inflection, as well as your pose and your tone.

Be positive in your instructions and directions. Point out the reason why we do things in a certain way.

Consistency

From the arrival of your campers, show that you are a firm but fair leader. You set the tone for your group. Earn respect by showing it. Be firm until expected behavioural patterns are established. Remember that children expect to be disciplined. They will cooperate only if they know what is expected of them.

Set your standards, establish few requirements. Be sure what you want is clearly defined, reasonable, and within the reach and capacity of the age group with which you are working.

No favoritism (although it will be there). Show a genuine liking for your campers and job, a faith in the better nature of your wards, and always a sense of humor.

Empathy

Before you get excited, save yourself trouble and help the camper by thinking your way into his feelings and then putting those feelings into words for them and you (e.g. "You're disappointed — you were counting on this and now we can't do it and that makes you mad," or "It's hard to wait for something you like, isn't it"). Do this before you try any of the other discipline techniques, such as arguing, reasoning, preaching, lecturing, and using your fancy psychological tricks.

Aggressive behaviour and disturbing behaviour very often start from the child's anxiety which is a result of anger or resentment. While it may not be possible to discover what the camper is anxious about, the situation can often be helped by something that makes the child feel safe.

Individualization

Try to learn each particular child's language and learn to use it naturally. It also means learning their particular feelings about things, especially the areas that are charged for them (e.g. food, physical contact or injury, losing in games).

When a problem has been explored in the above ways, help the campers frame their own plans for improving the situation, away from the other campers' ears.

Communication

The average leader talks too much. Good counsellors talk only when their campers are listening and when they have something important to say. Speaking clearly, simply, with dignity and authority in tone, and at a moderate speed will be most effective. We also must return the courtesy and give our campers every opportunity to talk while we listen.

If the campers may tell you on their own, give them the chance, asking them the questions such as "Is there anything you want to tell me?" Don't interrupt without apology and explanation, and only then do so sparingly. Don't ask "Why?" Usually a child doesn't know "why?" or they can't express it if they do.

WHEN SHOULD A CHILD BE DISCIPLINED?

The general rule is that children need to be redirected when they act in a disturbing and annoying manner which affects the other members of the group in a negative manner. What does this theory really mean?

- Every camp has certain regulations which must be adhered to. When safety is a factor or there is a conscious breaking of these regulations, it becomes a discipline problem to be dealt with.
- When the camper becomes uncooperative and does not respond to reasonable and necessary suggestions and/or directions of the leader, some control must be exercised.
- Children of all ages are fond of testing the limits of their superiors. When the child goes beyond the boundaries set by the leader, then he or she must be disciplined. Here again, it might be noted that a busy camper is seldom mischievous.
- As long as campers are members of a social unit, they must be encouraged to do their share of the work and to participate where it is necessary to do so with fellow members.

Experience has taught that misdemeanors must be checked, but do not be petty. Be sure the camper sees you later if the incident requires more than a word or two at the time. "See everything and notice little."

SOME CONTROL TECHNIQUES

Signal Interference

When a camper is disturbing discussion or not paying attention to instructions, a dramatic pause, a nod, or a wave will be a signal. If the child is aware of your intentions, sometimes nothing more is needed for minor problems.

Proximity Control

Move into the area of the disturbance and settle it by your mere physical presence without interrupting your planned problem. A hand on the shoulder or a gentle tap usually gets the message across.

Direct Appeal

Show your displeasure by use of your voice, employing a tone of authority. Avoid yelling. Do not overuse the voice. A calm but stern tone will make your point quite adequately. If your appeal is disregarded and the child persists in misbehaving, always follow through with appropriate discipline. Do not make threats. Never say, "Do this or else!" You either have to back such statements up, which may be injudicious, or back down, which is suicidal. When you make threats, you tie your own hands. Always leave the camper a choice for acceptable behaviour. "If you wish to play in the sandbox you must not throw sand; or you can sit on the grass and watch the others play."

This Matter of Justice

There are, unfortunately, no pat solutions for particular problems. Each case and each child deserves individual and unique consideration. What is their family situation? What could be the possible cause of the action? What might be a practical solution? Discipline? Which solution is in the child's best interest?

Each discipline problem is usually a conflict between people. Thus, it is the personality characteristics of the people involved that are the controlling factors, and these characteristics can be so different, that it is impossible and impractical to suggest solutions to all the problems.

Be certain, in order to be just, that everyone is fully aware of the consequences of misbehaviour. Show a natural and fair action for the offence.

Be certain also that each camper sees a lesson to be learned for the punishment.

The leader must be dependable, fair and consistent in all decisions. Campers must be sure that justice is always tempered with:

- compassion, never sarcasm or belittlement. Avoid anything that hurts the camper's self-esteem. Never punish them so that they are teased, embarrassed, or ridiculed even when it appears harmless and the camper appears to be taking it in a good spirit;
- empathy, which is not sympathy;
- complete mental presence, never when you are impassioned with the deed or the circumstances. The effect of a loud reprimand is usually just the reverse. The louder the leader, the less the camper hears. When you lose your temper, you lose respect of all campers and often become an easy target for other budding mischievous campers.

Discipline is never:

- retaliation;
- retribution;
- punishment for punishment's sake or group punishment. The innocent are justifiably resentful.

Punishment is always the last resort. In no instance may justice at camp ever take the form of physical punishment.

Studies show that 95% of all children respond to motivation. Therefore, it follows that discipline problems will be kept to a minimum if the campers are provided with proper motivation and intelligent direction by their leaders.

FURTHER READING

Available from: Canadian Camping Association
Suite 2, 1806 Avenue Rd., Toronto, Ontario M5M 3Z1
Telephone: (416) 781-4717

Camp and the Child

A series of articles celebrating the International Year of the Child have been combined into a single publication: The Child and Values, The Child and the Earth, The Child and Emotional Growth, The Child and Play, The Child as a Spiritual Being, and The Whole Child. The articles include the educative aspects of camp experiences, value education potential in a camp setting, the child's relationship to the natural world, the importance of play activities in camp, spiritual aspects of camp life, and all-round growth and development.

American Camping Association, 1979

Camp, The Child's World

Eight articles which explore why camp must be a child's world and how we can help mold this world so that we may best serve each child. Excellent for counsellor training.

American Camping Association, 32 p., 1962

Camper Guidance - A Basic Handbook

Dr. Joel W. Bloom and A. Cooper Ballantine.

A must for every counsellor in every camp.

American Camping Association, 24 p., 1971

Camper Guidance in the Routines of Daily Living

Dr. Joel W. Bloom has written a series of articles for use as supplementary reading for counsellor training.

American Camping Association

Psychology of the Child and Adolescent (4th Ed.)

Robert I. Watson, Henny Clay Lindren.
Macmillan Publishing Co. Inc. 1979

A detailed text on all aspects of childhood development.

Child Development

John J. Mitchell
Holt, Rinehart and Winston of Canada, Limited, Toronto, 1980

A readable, thorough look at the 'ages and stages' of growth and development



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